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BOOK REVIEWS

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ISLAM AND MUSLIMS

George W. Braswell, Jr.

Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers,
2000.

\$9.95, paper, 183 pages

One of the most discussed topics in the closing years of the twentieth century was the soaring population of the world. At the dawn of the new millennium, our planet is now the home of more than six billion people. An equally important phenomenon has been the migration to the Western countries of a great number of people from what used to be known as the mission fields of Asia and Africa. This fact demands our attention since some of our neighbors are followers of one of the major world religions. Lately, Muslims have become quite visible in our metropolitan areas due to a great influx of immigrants from Southeast Asia and the Middle East. Furthermore, they have gained quite a few converts, especially among African-Americans. Soon they may overtake the Jewish population and become the second largest religious community in North America. While there is no dearth of literature in English on Islam, most of such works are written by secular authors who have no interest in missions to Muslims.

This is why this latest book by George W. Braswell, Jr., on Islam and Muslims is such a welcome event. In 1996, he published a similar work, *Islam: Its Prophet, Peoples, Politics*

and Power. The author is professor of missions and world religions at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

In the fourteen chapters of his book, Dr. Braswell treats the following topics: The Muslims Are Coming; Muhammad: Prophet, Ruler, Commander in Chief; Believe Correctly, for the Quran Says So; Living the Good Life: How to Get to Heaven; A Whirlwind Beginning: A Global Expansion; Are All Muslims Alike? Unity And Diversity; Sitting at Table with Muslims; Muslims and Some Big Issues; The Clash of Two Giants: Christianity and Islam; Islam's View of Jesus and Christians; Christian Responses to Muslim Denials; Jesus and Muhammad; The Christians Are Coming; Muslims in the United States.

So it is no exaggeration to say that the scope of this book is encyclopedic. Everything you need to know about Islam and Muslims is right here at your fingertips. The "You" in the title of the book, is obviously the American Christian who values his or her faith as based on the Holy Scriptures, and who needs help to properly engage in missions. In this age of globalization, Muslims and other followers of world religions, have become our new neighbors. We have a golden opportunity to meet Muslims and share with them the authentic good news. But it is not an easy task, for unlike the followers of other religions, Muslims have come to reside among us with religious and cultural baggage that is thoroughly antithetic to the Christian faith and life.

I totally agree with Braswell when he writes: "Christian witness to Muslims is based not only on understanding as much as possible about Muslim belief and practice but also on one's own preparation in Scripture and prayer" (7).

There are other quotable gems. Professor Braswell contrasts the different "mandates" of Christianity and Islam in these words:

What does the future hold for relations between Christianity and Islam? That is uncertain, but one thing is clear: both religions have a message and a mandate. Christianity has a mandate to go into all the world and preach the gospel, a gospel of salvation and reconciliation in Jesus Christ. Islam has a mandate to practice jihad and to bring the non-Muslim world under the rule of Allah and the injunctions of the Quran (8).

Another statement dealing with "Religious Liberty and Freedom of Religion" deserves a full quotation.

On one hand the Quran asserts, "Let there be no compulsion in religion." (2:256) On the other hand it states, "If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to God), never will it be accepted of him, and in the hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost" (3:85).

Islam has a history of ill treatment and at times death to those who leave it. The Quran speaks harshly of apostasy; an apostate will face the wrath of God in the hereafter. (47:25-28) Islamic law (sharia) often demanded the punishment of death for apostasy from Islam. Many traditions say of those who change their religion from Islam, "Let them be killed."

Christians have been placed in great danger in missionary efforts toward Muslims. Any convert from Islam to Christianity has also faced even greater risk. Thus, freedom of religion has not been a positive matter within Islam. Some Muslim nations prohibit missionary activity, restrict the religious freedom of minority religions, and place great obstacles in church building and growth.

The overarching worldview of Islam is that of Islam against the world. The world must be converted to Islam, or brought under its domination. . . . The Muslim view has been "once a Muslim always a Muslim," thus the harsh treatment for apostasy. As Islam grows and multiplies in non-Muslim populations, it faces issues of separation of religion and state and religious liberty for all peoples (121).

While I have great appreciation for this book, I found certain mistakes that should be corrected in a future edition. They fall under two categories: some are in the area of transliteration of Arabic words, while others are important factual errors.

On page 10, the author in referring to the controversies among Christian churches in the days of Muhammad (sixth and seventh centuries,) wrote:

Also, within the Byzantine Empire, the Eastern Orthodox Christians had theological differences with the Roman Catholic papacy in Rome. There were disputes over the doctrine of the Trinity and the nature of Jesus Christ. These disputes were later to influence Muhammad and his understanding of Christianity.

There is no doubt that the disputes among Christian churches before the days of Muhammad may have contributed to his misunderstanding of Christianity. However, these theological controversies beginning with Nicea in 325 AD and culminating at Chalcedon in 451 AD were not disputes between Rome and Constantinople. The controversies centered around the natures and wills of Jesus Christ. They occurred within Eastern Christianity and gave rise to the Monophysite and Nestorian churches. The final rupture between Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism did not take place until 1053 AD, four centuries after the rise of Islam!

On page 46, the author deals again with the divisions among Christians at the time of the rise of Islam. But he describes these controversies as having occurred between Rome and Constantinople. "Christianity was engaged in internal struggles between the Roman Catholic church headquartered in Rome and the Eastern Orthodox church headquartered in Constantinople." But as I remarked in the pre-

vious paragraph, actually the theological and ecclesiastical divisions at that time occurred within the territory of Eastern Christianity. The Great Schism between East and West did not take place until early in the Second Millennium.

The real tragedy of Eastern Christianity is that the Orthodox party used the arm of the state to persecute the Monophysites in Egypt and the Nestorians in Mesopotamia. It was the followers of these non-Chalcedonian persecuted churches who mistakenly welcomed the Arab-Muslim armies imagining that they were their liberators. Later on they discovered to their dismay that the Muslim conquerors had imposed on them the harsh rules of the so-called "Protected" or "Dhimmi" status.

A similar confusion between Rome and Constantinople is found on page 95, in the fourth paragraph. Instead of reading it as "*the Church of Rome*," it should read "*the Church of Constantinople*."

On page 32, when transliterating the Arabic words of *The Great Creed of Islam*, an important word is omitted. The Arabic version "of the confession (*shahada*) of Muslims" is rendered:

Ilaha illa Allah. Muhammad rasul Allah. The first Arabic word *La* of the confession is omitted. Without it (a negative particle,) the confession is meaningless. Usually, this brief Islamic credo is prefaced by the Arabic words: *Ash-hadu anna*, i.e., I bear witness. The complete Muslim confession states:

La Ilaha illa Allah, Muhammad rasul Allah. ("I bear witness that there is no god but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God.")

On page 37, the Arabic name for the *Feast of Sacrifice* is *Id al-Adha*, and not "Id Adhan," as printed. The latter spelling may be due to Dr. Braswell's great acquaintance with the Persian language that transliterates the Arabic original words differently.

On page 91, the name of the radical Muslim leader should be transliterated, *Quthb*, and not *Qubt*. *Qubt* is the Arabic spelling for a *Copt*, a Christian from Egypt.

On page 97, there is a great confusion regarding the exact identity of the Muslim rulers who persecuted Western Christian pilgrims coming to Jerusalem, thus paving the way for the Crusades in 1096. The following episode is related by the author: "In 1076 a Muslim Turkish emir who took control of Jerusalem under the authority of the Ottoman Empire placed extreme difficulties upon Christian pilgrims." Actually, the first time the Ottoman Turks appeared on the horizon of world history was around 1280. The Ottomans conquered Constantinople in 1453, thus bringing to an end the Byzantine Empire. It was not until 1516 that they began the conquest of the Middle East, getting control over Jerusalem. The *Muslim Turkish emir* belonged to the Seljuk Turks, who had wielded power in the Middle East centuries before the rise of the Ottoman Empire.

These suggested corrections are not meant at all to detract from the great value of this work. Joseph Braswell's *What You Need to Know About Islam and Muslims* has many excellent and helpful features. Any serious student of Islam will be greatly enriched by owning this book.

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PAPAL SIN

Garry Wills

New York, New York: Doubleday (2000)

312 pages, cloth, \$25.00

If you saw the movie, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* you may remember a scene whereby Indiana Jones travels to

Italy to begin a search for the Holy Grail. He is looking for an "X" to mark the spot to begin his search inside a rather large, historic library. He becomes frustrated because the mark he is looking for should be readily seen from his map, but he cannot seem to locate it.

He could not find the "X" mark because it was a rather large mark that could not be seen from his level; in fact, he was actually standing on it. It was not until he ran up a flight of stairs, which enabled him to look down from a different plane, that he could clearly see the mark.

This scenario parallels author Garry Wills as he writes a stinging critique of the highest office in Catholicism. He is looking to expose the truth buried and marked with an "X" within the Catholic Church. Until he is able to grasp the real issue, however, which is the essence of the true gospel, he is merely dealing with the symptoms of the Catholic structures.

In *Papal Sin*, Garry Wills, a Roman Catholic and professor of history at Northwestern University, advances arguments that rigorously dismantle some of the most basic historic structures of the Catholic Church. He believes these structures are deceitful and thus fail to live up to the name and integrity of the Catholic Church. The teachings, traditions, and hierarchy that Wills attacks are ultimately protected and fortified, he insists, at great cost to the Church.

Wills portrays himself, throughout his book, as a "truth teller" comparable to other "truth tellers" such as Augustine, Cardinal Newman, Lord Acton and Pope John XXIII. He feels the time has come to uncover the "quiet modern form of papal sin." Little does he know about the real meaning behind the words of Christ when he said, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31-32).

Wills deals with six critical issues and positions of the

Church and the papacy—the response to the Holocaust, contraception, the priesthood, the sacraments, Mariology, and abortion. One will read in vain to discover the real issue in Rome's system of dogma and practice—namely, the essence of the biblical gospel. I will comment on each of his concerns and how he believes the Catholic Church is being deceitful in its treatment, teaching, and politics.

HOLOCAUST

Wills begins by accusing the Catholic Church of disingenuous explanations, outright denials, professions, deference, pieties, and dodges. He labels these “structures of deceit” by the Catholic Church and provides a historical framework illustrating that previous popes did not readily address the persecution of the Jews and were in fact anti-Semitic through their neutrality toward the Holocaust.

Wills goes on to accuse the Catholic Church of creating a historical lie to promote the cause of a Jewish woman, named Edith Stein, who was born in 1891 and died a nun at Auschwitz in 1942. She was a Carmelite nun who took the name Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross and was canonized in 1998 by John Paul II. Wills accuses the Catholic Church of deploying deceit in order to portray Stein as a Catholic victim of the Holocaust. One criterion for becoming a saint in the Catholic Church is the witnessing of a miracle performed by the candidate. Wills believes that the Church concocted the story relating to the miracle as well as distorted the truth regarding a bishop's letter that led to the cause of Stein's death. According to Wills, Stein did not think so much that Jews had to be converted, individually, as that Jesus would include them in the salvation that was promised them, despite their lack of belief in him. She believed that, “she offered her own sufferings, in unison with Christ's on the cross, as redemptive of her people.” This would, of course, implicate Stein as a co-redeemer fig-

ure, certainly worthy of canonization.

Wills further implicates Pope John Paul II, the current pope, in his story regarding a Polish Franciscan priest named Maximilian Kolbe. Kolbe set up a worldwide organization known as Knights of Immaculata that reflected his own “intense, almost fanatical devotion to the Virgin Mary.” Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II) shared Kolbe's ardent devotion to the Immaculate Conception and admired the undoubted heroism of Kolbe's death. Wills tells how Kolbe, who was arrested for resistance to Nazi control of youth groups, sacrificed his life for a fellow prisoner he did not even know. However, Wills makes the charge that John Paul II, in his zeal for Kolbe's canonization, circumvented the process because Kolbe was not arrested for his faith but for political charges. Wills feels that the Catholic Church, wanting to find Catholic victims in the Holocaust, was breaking its own rules.

CONTRACEPTION

Wills continues his indictment of the papacy using the encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae* issued by Pope Paul VI in 1968. According to Wills, this encyclical was the most disastrous papal document of the century, equivalent in its wreckage to the nineteenth century's *Syllabus of Errors* issued by Pius IX. Wills does not see the great disaster for the true gospel from the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, which destroyed the essence of the biblical doctrine of justification by faith. Wills claims that the Church's position on sex and contraception is unbiblical as well as out of step with a modern world and the majority of Roman Catholics. He criticizes Pope John Paul harshly regarding his view on sex as he states, “John Paul makes the sex act so holy that only monks are really worthy of it.” Wills writes that the Catholic Church does not have biblical support, clergy support or majority support, for its

stance on contraception and the propriety of sex within the marriage. He believes that John Paul is heavily influenced, by his total devotion to the Virgin Mary. Thus Wills implies that the pope is promulgating his own vision, causing the rest of the Church to live in structures of deceit.

THE PRIESTHOOD

One structure of Catholicism that Wills completely dismantles is the concept of the priesthood in its present form. He begins with historic and biblical traditions that women of the Church need to be recognized and elevated to a much more significant role within the Church. He makes an argument that New Testament writings do not support the historic Catholic position of an all-male priesthood. Wills attacks the Church's position of priestly celibacy by illustrating that if the Church was founded on Christ and the apostles, and the apostles were considered priests, then it should be noted that many of the apostles were indeed married. Wills points out, "In the earliest church, the normal expectation was that a man would be married. Celibacy was the odd thing that needed explaining."

The most intriguing aspect of Wills' account of the priesthood, however, is his charge that priests do not have the power to consecrate the Eucharist! "Given the tremendous emphasis later focused on the power of the priest to consecrate, it is odd that the New Testament—despite its long list of various functions and ministries in the Christian community—never mentions this at all. Recent Catholicism would make this the major power passed down from the apostles. In fact, no one—apostle or not—is described as presiding over the communal meal." Wills furthers his case by claiming that there is "no priesthood in the New Testament." Wills leans closer to the Reformational position of a priesthood of the whole Christian community. This author uses Augustine's writings to diminish the

power of the priesthood and the doctrinal transformation of the Eucharist.

Wills argues that the Vatican continues to deny that there is a major problem within the priesthood, chiefly in the area of recruitment, retention and supply. He devotes considerable space to the inherent problems in the priesthood's sexual sins such as child molesting, masturbation, and homosexuality. Although Wills does not believe there is anything wrong with a priest being gay, he does believe that the Church conceals this major problem in order to preserve the priestly aura, at whatever cost to the abused. In other words, for many in the priesthood, the appearance of celibacy is only a facade for the real issue of preserving the Church from scandal. The refusal of the hierarchy to directly deal with these issues advances the argument that the Church is deceitful.

SACRAMENTS

In the chapter titled "Hydraulics of Grace" Wills attacks one of the foundations of the Catholic Church—its sacramental system. He challenges the legitimacy of the historicity of the sacraments of marriage and penance. In an earlier chapter Wills questions the very foundation of Catholic Sacerdotalism and the real meaning of the Eucharist. Will leans much more toward a Protestant view of the Eucharist and accuses the Church of manufacturing the priesthood's magical aura in the Mass, changing the host and the wine into the real body and blood of Christ. Wills goes on to say that "the apostles are never described as having the power to consecrate, in the New Testament itself or in the early Christian literature."

The Catholic sacramental system, he writes, provides channels or "hydraulics" of God's grace. The clergy controls the hydraulic system. The current Catholic sacramental system offers "storage tanks" of grace controlled by this papal

system, so that "a new form of idolatry, the Pope, becomes a substitute for the Spirit." It should be pointed out, however, that Wills makes no mention of the teaching on infant baptism in connection with his hydraulic grace metaphor. Perhaps Wills' silence on this sacrament indicates his understanding of this sacraments' power regarding his own personal salvation.

MARIAN POLITICS

In this section, Wills not only questions the Marian doctrines of the Catholic Church, but he further claims that the popes have used these doctrines to further their agendas, most notably the dogma of papal infallibility. These uses of Mary for papal purposes can be seen as early as the fifteenth century and have continued down to the present under John Paul. Wills dismantles the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception and further shows that the Church's pillar, Thomas Aquinas, had argued forcefully against the Immaculate Conception of Mary. The author believes that John Paul is infatuated with the Virgin Mary and stepped over the line when he commissioned a panel of twenty-three scholars to consider defining Mary as co-redemptrix of the human race in 1997. "Nothing [referring to Mary as co-redeemer] could be more alien from the treatment of Mary in the gospels."

ABORTION

Wills begins to further show his liberal identity with his diatribe on abortion. He clearly sets himself against the position of the Church, accusing the Church of having no scriptural authority to sustain its position. Instead he argues that the women's right to an abortion is supported by organizations such as the American Law Institute, the American Medical Association, and the American Public Health Association. Wills goes on to offer a few weak argu-

ments suggesting that the fetus does not constitute a human person, since the Catholic Church does not advocate baptizing a fetus. He also argues that the fetus does not possess a soul. His favorite church father, Augustine, is cited for his agnostic view of the uncertainty of when a soul is imparted into the human being. He finally takes the position that life, with a soul, does not begin until birth; therefore the elimination or killing of the live fetus can be justified without any sense of a moral wrong. Although abortion is not murder, according to Wills, it is not to be held up to as an ideal. In fact it should be avoided, principally through birth control methods. He further confuses the issue by claiming that although the fetus is not a person, it is a human life. Wills is convinced that since Scripture is silent on the matter, we should not take a dogmatic position on it. Perhaps Wills needs to read more carefully the psalmist who paints God's reality of the unborn child when he wrote, "*For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb*" (Psalm 139:13).

CONCLUSION

I found the book utterly remarkable, not for its content, but its author. Although the book is well written, strongly documented, and well constructed, I am amazed at the ultimate stance Wills takes. After reading his arguments, and knowing that Wills remains a Roman Catholic, I can only conclude that he is standing on the "X" but is unable to see it.

He systematically dismantles the structures and foundations of dogmatical Roman Catholicism. In his critique he levels the papacy as sinful, the power of the priesthood as illegitimate and morally corrupt, the meaning of the eucharist as a magical rite, its system of sacramental grace as a stronghold, the teachings regarding Mary as politically charged as well as erroneous, the dogma on papal infalli-

bility as wicked, and the official treatment of the Holocaust as a cover up made to preserve the office of the papacy.

According to Wills, it is time to "free" the Roman Catholic clergy and laity from these massive structures of deceit. His aim is to set people free by telling them the real truth. Wills unfortunately fails to address the real truth that will set the Catholics free, the free grace of God in the gospel of Christ. But when one does not know where the real truth is to be found, one is finally reduced to exposing the discontent and void of the human heart.

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REFORMED CONFESSIONS HARMONIZED

Joel R. Beeke and Sinclair B. Ferguson
Grand Rapids: Baker Books (1999)
287 pages, paper, \$19.99

Both the unity and the diversity of the Reformed faith become evident when one examines the official statements of doctrine which various Reformed bodies have published since the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Now it is possible to make such a study quickly, thanks to publication of this convenient reference volume. Joel Beeke and Sinclair Ferguson, two of the most respected Reformed theologians of our day, have assembled the pertinent material in a systematic arrangement which allows students of the Reformed faith to locate official statements about any doctrine at a glance. In parallel columns are the *Belgic Confession* (1561), the *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563), the *Canons of Dordt* (1619), the *Second Helvetic Confession* (1566), and the *Westminster Standards* (1647-48). In each case the editors have arranged the appropriate confessional statements so that they correspond to one another with regard to the

same teaching.

Joel Beeke's preference for the *Belgic Confession* is evident from its placement in the first column; the others follow in chronological order. Although the *Belgic Confession* was the earliest such statement among those listed in this collection, it was not the first Reformed confession. The *Helvetic Confession* appeared for the first time in 1536, and doctrinal statements from Ulrich Zwingli and the reformers of Zurich appeared still earlier. *Reformed Confessions Harmonized* is therefore not a complete compendium of all theological documents of the Reformed faith but a selection of the ones the editors deem to have exerted the most enduring influence. Orthodox Anglicans and Reformed Baptists might ask why this volume makes no reference to the *Thirty-nine Articles of Religion* (1571) or to the *London Confession* (revised, 1689). The decision about which statements to include in such a harmony reflects the width of definition the compilers assign to the term *Reformed*. Perhaps, in their view, the Anglican episcopate and the Reformed Baptist view of baptism disqualify these bodies from recognition as genuinely Reformed, so that their respective statements do not merit inclusion.

In addition to the very useful harmony of the confessions and catechisms, this volume contains a large annotated bibliography of Reformed theological writings. Under each of the articles of the *Belgic Confession* there is a list of books and articles carefully arranged and evaluated. Were a person to read even two or three items from each subdivision, he or she would obtain an excellent education in the historic faith of the Reformed churches. This volume belongs in the library of every serious student of theology.

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THE WAYS OF GOD

Henry T. Blackaby and Roy T. Edgemon
Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman and Holman (2000)
177 pages, cloth, \$17.99

This is not a profound book; however, it is a useful one. Blackaby and Edgemon have written a layman's introduction to "how God reveals himself before a watching world." Although the subtitle suggests a discussion of the various media of revelation by which God makes himself known—one thinks of the classic categories of natural and special revelation—this is not the thrust. Rather, the authors are more interested in the character or nature of God's economy, that is, of what God's revelation tells us about the kind of God he is and how we may relate to him. They write, "If God's people desire to be on mission with him to accomplish his purposes, they must understand his nature and ways" (1). In a day when the divine economy has become saturated with the protocols of marketing, self-help, entertainment, and feel-good religion, *The Ways of God* would seem to offer some useful correctives.

After reminding us that "God's ways are not our ways" (chapter 1), and that we must seek him on his terms if we are truly to know and serve him, Blackaby and Edgemon launch into a series of discussions of the love of God, his sovereignty and holiness, the way of truth, and the everlasting (unchanging) character of God's ways. Each of the six chapters treats these very familiar subjects in a winsome and mildly challenging manner. The overarching purpose of this little book is to convince the reader that "God's purpose in working through you is not to help you to be successful or even worry-free, but to use your life as a means by which he reveals himself. He is not there to reveal you to a watching world. He is there to reveal *himself* to a yearning, hurting, and watching world" (68).

This is good mortar for pastors and church leaders committed to shoring-up the foundations of the house of faith. In the main the authors' views are classically reformed. In particular, their view of the faith that justifies—that it is brought to completion in good works of obedience to the Lord—will be welcomed by readers of this journal. Their style is conversational and pastoral, devoid of technical jargon or rhetorical flourish. The book can perhaps be especially valuable in a group study context, and a helpful study guide is included to facilitate such use.

There are a few problems, but they do not take center stage and are, for the most part, over-written by other parts of the book. The authors obscure the centrality of God's grace in his dealings with people by indicating that God entered into covenant with Abraham because the latter believed in him (12), whereas a more consistently biblical view sees the patriarch's faith arising out of God's gracious initiatives toward him. Further, they run the risk of minimizing the wrath of God by saying that "mankind broke his heart when sin marred the perfection of God's creation" (32), and that he "is radical against sin—not against sinners, but against sin" (35-36).

Additionally, the book would have been helped by a chapter each on the justice and mercy of God, as well as one on the call to suffering. Believers need to know that kingdom work is difficult, but that they will be vindicated in the end, if they are going to have the strength to endure the hardships foisted on them in an unbelieving world as they go out in mission for their King. While these are not insignificant omissions, they do not negate the value of the book for what it discusses.

The Ways of God is a tool that could provoke deeper and more serious study on the part of lay men and women earnest in their desire to know God better and to serve him more faithfully in the work of reviving and reforming his

church and turning the world upside-down for Christ.

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*THE WORKS OF JONATHAN EDWARDS, VOLUME 16
LETTERS AND PERSONAL WRITINGS*

George S. Claghorn, editor
New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press (2000)
854 pages, cloth, \$80.00

The publication of more Jonathan Edwards material, especially material that has never been published in any previous form, is newsworthy for serious theologians and historians.

This present volume, which appeared in early 2000, gathers a number of the extant letters of Jonathan Edwards, along with his major personal writings. The editor spent more than thirty years searching through America, Scotland, and England looking for letters and documents by and about Edwards. The result is pure gold for those who love Edwards. This amazing collection of 236 letters includes 116 that have never been published. It also includes four previously published autobiographical texts: Edwards' meditation "On Sarah Pierpont" (his future wife at the time he wrote the piece), and his "Diary," "Resolutions," and "Personal Narrative." What is interesting about these four pieces, all of which are quite brief, is that no original copies of any of them exist. In fact, two of these documents even combine separate printed versions. These facts are made clear and are helpfully noted in this Yale University critical edition. Earlier editions lack these annotations and historical observations.

What we are given by this new volume is a very candid look into the private life of Jonathan Edwards himself.

What were his relationships like with his parents, his siblings, his college classmates, friends, and family? How did he view the political and religious leaders of his own time?

We also are given documents on Edwards' view of slavery and his relationship with the Stockbridge Indians. On slavery, for example, he held a view somewhat advanced for the common views of his age. In a 1738 letter Edwards defends the purchase and ownership of slaves providing they fit with the common legal definition of a slave held at the time, that they are treated humanely, and that they are Christianized. He condemns as hypocrisy the practices of those who denounce slavery while benefiting from the goods produced or imported through their labor. What is unusual in this position is his opposition to the extension of the trade, i.e., enslaving free Africans. He bases this upon passages in the Old Testament regarding God's allowing the Israelites to buy slaves, and to a lesser extent, on passages in the New Testament. Though contemporaries sometimes argued that the slave trade might extend the gospel to nations yet unevangelized, Edwards believed the resentment caused by such practice would actually hinder the mission of the church. The editor argues that his position was a step toward the view reached by Samuel Hopkins and Jonathan Edwards, Jr., in advocating the abolition of slavery in the next generation.

When Edwards was facing the censures of his own church council in Northhampton in 1749, which led finally to his ouster from the pulpit of this famous church, what was he thinking? How did he respond? What private struggles did he have to address in his own soul? Here we get more than an inkling from his diaries and private correspondence.

In a Stockbridge letter of 1753 we are allowed to see his counsel and tender heart toward his son, Timothy. He tells young Timothy to secure grounding in the languages,

which he deems essential for a proper education. Timothy is further urged to enjoy his good health but to never forget his own mortality.

Letters to such famous people as Joseph Bellamy and John Erskine are also included. These deal with every day real problems with Indians in Stockbridge to the transfer of sheep from Bellamy to Edwards. He writes, for example, to Erskine (1755) in Scotland:

I have nothing very comfortable to write concerning my own success in this place. The business of the Indian mission, since I have been here, has been attended with strange embarrassments, such as I never could have expected or so much as once dreamed of; of such a nature, and arising from such a quarter, that I take no delight in being very particular and explicit upon it (663).

It is obvious that these Stockbridge years, though filled with opportunity to write and think profoundly, produced, so far as Edwards was concerned, little outward fruit in his preaching ministry. He speaks of Indians breaking in upon worship meetings and of their killing English families in the town. The fears and dangers he faced during these years were quite real. The providence of God in putting him in Stockbridge is strange to all who ponder this great mind and heart stuck on this wild frontier, facing danger and peril on a daily basis, yet here he wrote his greatest work for the benefit of every generation since.

Many readers of this quarterly will be familiar with much of the material at the end of this volume. It is so rich that it is hard to single out any one portion to get the flavor of the whole. I will give only a sample paragraph from his *Personal Narrative* to demonstrate what I mean about the richness of Edwards' personal insight into the glory of God.

Though it seems to me, that in some respects I was a far better Christian, for two or three years after my first conversion, than I am now; and lived in a more constant delight and pleasure; yet of late years, I have had a more full and constant sense of the absolute sovereignty of God, and a delight in that sovereignty; and have had more of a sense of the glory of Christ, as a mediator, as revealed in the gospel. On one Saturday night in particular, had a particular discovery of the excellency of the gospel of Christ, above all other doctrines; so that I could not but say to myself; "This is my chosen light, my chosen doctrine": and of Christ, "This is my chosen prophet." It appeared to me to be sweet beyond all expression, to follow Christ, and to be taught and enlightened and instructed by him; to learn of him, and live to him (803).

Many scholars have studied Edwards the philosopher and Edwards the theologian. Some have done so with great awe for his brilliant mind. Others have seen the glory of the Christ he loved and preached. Now, through this new volume, we can all gain a unique insight into Jonathan Edwards himself. Many of the readers of this publication will be deeply interested in the thought of Edwards and thus should greet this new volume with joy, even if the price breaks the monthly book budget!

JOHN H. ARMSTRONG
Editor